

SPEECH  
OF  
SENATOR DOUGLAS,  
OF ILLINOIS,  
ON THE  
NAVAL APPROPRIATION BILL.

DELIVERED IN  
THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

JUNE 7, 1858.



WASHINGTON:  
PRINTED BY LEMUEL TOWERS.  
1858.

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## NAVAL APPROPRIATION BILL.

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The Senate having under consideration the Naval Appropriation bill—Mr. DOUGLAS said:

I agree, Mr. President, with most that has been said by my friend from Georgia, (Mr. TOOMBS,) and especially, that we ought to determine what we are to do in reference to the outrages upon our flag in the Gulf of Mexico and the West Indies, before we decide the amount of money we shall vote for war purposes. If we are going to content ourselves with simple resolutions that we will not submit to that which we have resolved for half a century, should never be repeated, I see no use in additional appropriations for navy or for army. If we are going to be contented with loud sounding speeches, with defiances to the British lion, with resolutions of the Senate alone, not concurred in by the other House, conferring no power on the Executive—merely capital for the country, giving no power to the Executive to avenge insults or prevent their repetition, what is the use of voting money? I find that patriotic gentlemen are ready to talk loud, resolve strong; but are they willing to appropriate the money? Are they willing to confer on the Executive, power to repel these insults, and to avenge them whenever they may be perpetrated? Let us know whether we are to submit and protest, or whether we are to authorize the President to resist and to prevent the repetition of these offences. If Senators are prepared to vote for a law reviving the act of 1839, putting the army, the navy, volunteers, and money at the disposal of the President to prevent the repetition of these acts, and to punish them, if repeated, then I am ready to give the ships and the money, but I desire to know whether we are to submit to these insults with a simple protest, or whether we are to repel them.

Gentlemen ask us to vote ships and money, and they talk to us about the necessity of a ship in China, and about outrages in Tampico, and disturbances in South America, and Indian difficulties in Puget Sound. Every enemy that can be found on the face of the earth is defied except the one that defies us. Bring in a proposition here to invest the President with power to repel British aggressions on Ameri-



can ships, and what is the response? High sounding resolutions declaring in effect, if not in terms, that, whereas, Great Britain has perpetrated outrages on our flag and our shipping, which are intolerable, and insufferable, and must not be repeated, therefore, if she does so again, we will whip Mexico, or we will pounce down upon Nicaragua, or we will get up a fight with Costa Rica, or we will chastise New Grenada, or we will punish the Chinese, or we will repel the Indians from Pugets Sound, [laughter,] but not a word about Great Britain! What I desire to know is, whether we are to meet this issue with Great Britain? I am told we shall do it when we are prepared. Sir, when will you be prepared to repel an insult unless when it is given? England has her ships of war, of various sizes, searching our vessels, firing across their bows, firing into their rigging, subjecting them to search not only in the Gulf of Mexico, but in the Caribbean sea, and upon the Atlantic. It is not confined to one captain, or one vessel, or one locality, but the outrages are committed by various ships, by the Styx on the coast of Cuba, by the Forward five hundred miles east of there, by the Buzzard a thousand miles from Cuba. Every arrival at our ports brings us information of the repetition of these offences, clearly demonstrating the fact that they are not accidental. They are not confined to one locality; they are not the acts of one ship or of one officer; they are the result of orders from Great Britain to execute this system of outrages on the American flag and American commerce. Are we to submit to it? If so, let us not say another word about it, pass no resolutions, make no speeches, vote no extra appropriations that we would not vote if these things had not occurred. If, on the contrary, we are not going to submit to them, why not act as we did on the northeastern boundary question in 1839. When the news arrived here on the 2d of March, 1839, that an American citizen had been taken prisoner on the disputed boundary of Maine, showing a disposition on the part of Great Britain to insist on her claim to the exclusive possession of that country, instantly the Senate, by a unanimous vote, passed a bill authorizing the President to repel any attempt on the part of Great Britain to enforce that claim, and for that purpose, putting at his disposal, the army, the navy, the militia, fifty thousand volunteers, and ten millions of money, to enable him to execute the will of the nation in that respect. Now, sir, why not revive that act, striking out "the disputed boundary," and inserting "her claims to the right of visitation and search," and then every provision of that bill would be applicable to the present case. My friend from Missouri, (Mr. GREEN,) calls my attention to the vote of the House of Representatives on that occasion. It stood one hundred and ninety-seven in the affirmative, and six in the negative. The vote in the Senate was forty-one in the affirmative, none in the negative.

Your Clays, your Calhouns, your Websters, the great men of former times were here then—men differing in politics in times of high party strife, at a period when Mr. Van Buren was President, and Clay, Webster, and Calhoun led the opposition. Still the moment this outrage was perpetrated by Great Britain upon our rights, all party dissensions were hushed, the opposition and the Administration stood as one man when the honor of the nation was assaulted. They did not hesitate to



confer upon Mr. Van Buren the power to resist the outrages committed by Great Britain in case they should be persevered in. Why not now revive the same law which was then passed by a unanimous vote in the Senate, and with only six dissenting voices in the other House, and confer upon President Buchanan the same power and authority which was then conferred upon President Van Buren, on the motion of Mr. Senator Buchanan. Do that, and then I am prepared to vote the ships, the money, the men, anything, everything necessary to vindicate our firm resolve. Yes, sir, I will go further, I will vote the ships and the money even now, trusting that Congress before it adjourns will arm the President with the necessary power and authority to prevent a repetition of these aggressions. I am, however, extremely unwilling to bury up the outrages of Great Britain, under all the talk and noise that is made about the injuries perpetrated by the South American Republics. I know that in South America outrages have been perpetrated on our commerce, on our citizens and their property, which ought to have been punished on the spot. I know they are continuing, and will continue from day to day, and year to year, until you clothe the Executive with the authority to punish them as promptly as the British Government punish similar outrages on their commerce, and their rights, but these things have been going on in South America for years. They are weak, feeble, unstable powers, entitled to our sympathy and our contempt mingled together. While I would clothe the Executive with power to punish them, I would only do it after I had avenged the insults perpetrated by Great Britain, or I would in the same act authorize the President to avenge them.

Sir, I tremble for the fame of America, for her honor, and for her character, when we shall be silent in regard to British outrages, and avenge ourselves by punishing the weaker powers instead of grappling with the stronger. I never did fancy that policy, nor admire that chivalry which induced a man when insulted by a strong man of his own size, to say that he would whip the first boy he found in the street, in order to vindicate his honor, or as is suggested by a gentleman behind me, that he would go home and whip his wife, [laughter,] in order to show his courage, inasmuch he was afraid to tackle the full grown man who had committed the aggression. Sir, these outrages cannot be concealed, they cannot have the go-by, we must meet them face to face. Now is the time when England must give up her claim to search American vessels, or we must be silent in our protests and resolutions and valorous speeches against that claim. It will not do to raise a navy for the Chinese seas, nor for Pugets Sound, nor for Mexico, nor for the South American Republics. It may be used for those purposes, but England must first be dealt with. Sir, we shall be looked upon as showing the white feather, if we strike a blow at any feeble power until these English aggressions and insults are first punished, and security is obtained that they are not to be repeated.

I shall vote for the amendment offered by my friend from Florida, under the authority of the Committee on Naval Affairs, providing for ten sloops of war. I shall also vote for the proposition of my friend from North Carolina, for the ten gun boats. I wish he had increased



the number to fifty, because I understand they can be constructed for about \$100,000 apiece, and five millions of dollars would give you fifty gun boats, vessels of a character more serviceable for coast defense than any other vessels you could have. They could enter every harbor, every creek, every bay, every nook where it is necessary to afford protection, and each one of them singly would be strong enough in time of war to capture an enemy's merchant vessel and bring it into port, or sink it as easily as a seventy-four, or the largest class of ships of war. I would increase the number of gun-boats to fifty; I would give the sloops asked for by the committee, but I would never permit this Congress to adjourn, after all the resolutions we have had reported, and all the brave speeches we have made, until we give the President power, and thereby make it his duty, to repel in future every repetition of these British outrages on our flag, and to use the army, the navy, the militia, and the treasury, to any extent which may be necessary for that purpose.

[Pending the same discussion and in reply to the remarks of several Senators on the same day, Mr. DOUGLAS again addressed the Senate as follows:]

Mr. DOUGLAS. I concur entirely with the Senator from Virginia, in the reasons he has given for the necessity of applying the provisions of the bill which he has reported from the Committee on Foreign Relations, as a substitute for one I introduced, to Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and New Granada; but I do not perceive the necessity of limiting the application to those countries, and not extending it beyond them. If his objection be true, that my proposition was to confer a war making power upon the President, then by applying the whole power of these provisions to Mexico, and the other three countries, he confers a war making power to that extent. I suppose if it is a violation of principle to give the President a war making power as applied to one country, it is no more so to give it to him generally. The objection I had to his provision was this: I had introduced a bill to authorize the President in cases of flagrant violations of the law of nations under circumstances admitting of no delay, to repel and punish the aggression. The Senator from Virginia, takes the provisions of that bill and endorses them as to four feeble, crippled powers, and omits the very country that is now committing outrages upon our flag and our shipping. I had introduced a bill, general in its provisions, applicable to England, France, Spain, Mexico, Central America, South America—everywhere where there were flagrant violations upon our flag under circumstances admitting of no delay.

Mr. MASON. Will the Senator allow me to interrupt him for a moment.

Mr. DOUGLAS. Certainly, with great pleasure.

Mr. MASON. Has the Senator remarked the difference between the causes of quarrel existing between Great Britain and the United States, and those existing between these Republics of Central America and Mexico, and the United States. Great Britain has certainly commit-



ted, or those in command of her armed vessels have committed, high offenses against this country; but we are utterly uninformed whether those are avowed or disavowed, whether reparation will be extended or refused on the part of that government. The matter is open for explanation and renunciation. That is our position with England. What is our relation with Mexico? What is our relation with Nicaragua, and those States in that neighborhood? Our people are taken by the Government forces within the territory of Mexico and imprisoned, and are imprisoned at this hour. At Tampico, one of her sea ports, from the decrepitude of the government, it is unable to protect our people when they go there. They have been seized and imprisoned within the last sixty days, and stripped of their property, which has been confiscated, with a knowledge that the Government of Mexico is too feeble to extend redress. I say the measure reported by the committee is not to make war upon Mexico. It is only to do for Mexico what Mexico is bound to do herself. That is the whole of it. I submit to the honorable Senator, as I cheerfully submit to the country, whether the one bill is not properly authorized in morals towards those Governments of Central America and Mexico, when if it were done in like manner toward England, for the purpose of plunging us into war, it would be an offense unpardonable in the legislative power, in my judgment.

Mr. DOUGLAS. I repeat that I agree with the Senator from Virginia, that there was abundant cause for the application of the power which I proposed to confer, with reference to Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and New Grenada. I agree, also, that the conferring of that power was not a war power, but a peace measure. The Senator does not consider it a war power; I do not consider it a war power. If it is not a war power with reference to them, it is not a war power when applied to other countries. Hence the very fact that he acknowledges that it is not a war power when applied to the countries to which he proposes to apply it, is an admission that it would not be a war power if it were made applicable to England, unless we are to understand that we are to apply one rule to a weak power, and another to a strong power. I do not understand that to be the rule. The measure that I have proposed with reference to these difficulties, has been a measure of peace. I intended the one which I brought forward, for which the Senator from Virginia has introduced a substitute, adopting the same measure but limiting its application, as a peace measure. It ought to exist in time of peace. It only confers on the President of the United States, outside of the limits of the Republic, that power which the Chief Magistrate of every other nation does already possess. It is only putting our Executive, in the vindication of the rights of American citizens abroad, on an equality with the Chief Magistrate of every other nation on earth. If it is not a dangerous power in the hands of all the kings, all the prime ministers, all the presidents of republics lies outside of the United States, I apprehend that it cannot be deemed a very dangerous one to be exercised by the President of the United States on other people, and not upon our own citizens abroad.

Then, sir, what is the point of complaint? The point at issue is



that Great Britain is searching our vessels. The Committee on Foreign Relations agreed unanimously, that she had no right to do it; that the practice of the right of search was a belligerent right; that it was an invasion of our sovereign rights; that we could never submit to it, and would never submit to it. Having resolved that far, the committee being unanimous to that extent, there was a difference of opinion as to how much further we should go. One side resolved that we will not submit to it; the other side so resolved, with a provision that if it should be done again we would repel it. That is all there is in the case. If it is right to resolve not to submit to it, it is a point of honor to repel the aggression when it is repeated. I ask if we are not disgraced, as a nation, if, after resolving that it is a belligerent act—that it is an infraction of our sovereignty—that we will never submit to it, we then refuse to authorize the President to repel the insult if it be repeated? That is the whole point. I desire, instead of bringing forward a substitute for the Senator's resolutions, to give the President power and authority to carry out the assertion which the Senator from Virginia, as chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, has made.

Mr. COLLAMER. I wish to ask the Senator a question, if he will allow me.

Mr. DOUGLAS. Certainly.

Mr. COLLAMER. I wish to ask where it is declared, either by the committee or the Senate, to be a belligerent act?

Mr. DOUGLAS. The report of the Committee on Foreign Relations so declares it, I think.

Mr. COLLAMER. That report has been presented to the Senate, but it has never been acted upon as yet. I wish to ask the Senator one more question: whether he regards the word "belligerent" as apply to a nation, and whether a belligerent act is a national act? If this is a belligerent act, and is a national act, we should declare war.

Mr. DOUGLAS. It does not follow, that for every belligerent act we shall declare war. The Senator from Virginia, in his report as chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, quoted Chief Justice Marshall to show that the practice of the right of search was a belligerent act. All belligerent acts do not necessarily produce war. You may repel them; you may grant letters of marque and reprisal—there are various remedies short of war for repelling and redressing belligerent acts. It does not follow by any means, when one nation perpetrates a violation of right against another, which of itself is a belligerent act, that war is the inevitable consequence, any more than it follows when one gentleman says something offensive to another that a peremptory challenge is a necessary result. A demand for explanation may be necessary. There are preludes to a declaration. So it is between nations. There may be a belligerent act performed. It leads to negotiation, to remonstrance. When these means fail, then the question comes whether our rights or honor be involved to such an extent as to make it imperative to go to



war, as a final result. If this violation of the freedom of the seas were a new thing—if the assertion of the right to search American vessels were now made for the first or even the second time, we might not, although treating it as a belligerent act, deem it necessary to go to war. But when the question has gone through half a century of dispute—when it has reached such a point that we refuse to discuss the question of right any further—when we have asserted that the argument is exhausted, and that the only thing left is to resort to resistance, if it be persevered in any further, it will not do for us, in the face of these outrages, repeated each day, to be silent with regard to them, and proceed to legislate for the punishment of Mexico, Nicaragua, and other weak and feeble powers at a distance. The bill reported by the Senator from Virginia, would be right if it were brought forward at a time when the aggravation came from those countries and not from England. I will vote for it. But to pass that by itself, and remain silent with regard to these British outrages, is to confess to the world that we are afraid of Great Britain, but we will maintain our courage by punishing some smaller, feebler, weaker power.

I do not bring forward the proposition to revive the act of the 3d of March, 1839, as a substitute for the bill reported by the Senator from Virginia, as he imagines. On the contrary, the two bills ought to go together. The one which I bring forward is applicable to England, and to her alone. It covers the present quarrel between us and England—not as a war measure, but as a peace measure. The only change that I make between that act as I bring it forward now, and as it was in the shape in which it originally passed, is to strike out the words "territory in dispute," and insert, "the claim of the right of search." Then the two cases are parallel, and the provision is as applicable to one as it is to the other.

Sir, there was one member of this body who, when the measure was brought in in 1839, was disposed to treat it as an act of war, until the great minds of the Senate, the patriots of that day, came forward and said no, Great Britain is performing a belligerent act; we must resist it at all hazards; if she perseveres in the wrong, then the consequences be on her head for having persevered in the wrong. Hence you find that Clay, Calhoun, Webster, Buchanan, and the leaders of the Senate of all parties of that day, united with entire unanimity in conferring upon President Van Buren the power to resist it. One man only hesitated. A distinguished and respected Senator from New Jersey, made the very point that is now being made, as to its being an act of war; but a distinguished Senator from Mississippi appealed to him, after a preliminary vote had been taken, and it was ascertained that the Senate were unanimous, with one exception, not to persevere in his opposition, but allow the Senate to stand unanimous in the assertion of a principle upon which all agreed, and Mr. SOUTHARD, in deference to the opinion of the remainder of the Senate, waived his objections, and allowed the bill to pass by a unanimous vote. Sir, did it turn out to be a measure of war, then? On the contrary, it resulted in peace, and you were saved from a war with Great Britain on the northeastern boundary question, by the unanimity of Congress at that time in preparing to



repel the assault. The vote in the Senate was unanimous, and in the House of Representatives it was one hundred and ninety-seven against six. This unanimity among the American people, as manifested by their representatives, saved the two countries from war, preserved peace between England and the United States upon that question. If the Senate had been nearly equally divided in 1839, if there had been but half-a-dozen majority for the passage of the measure, if the vote had been nearly divided in the House of Representatives, England would have taken courage from the divisions in our own councils, she would have pressed her claim to a point that would have been utterly inadmissible and incompatible with our honor, and war would have been the inevitable consequence.

I tell you, sir, the true peace measure is that which resents the insult and redresses the wrong promptly upon the spot, with a unanimity that shows the nation cannot be divided.

Unanimity now, prompt action, and determined resistance to this claim of the right of search is the best peace measure, and the only peace measure, to which you can resort. You have said that this nation will not submit to this right of search; every department of this Government has repeated it, all political parties unite in the sentiment; there is one point on which the American people are united, and on which they have stood for half a century. It is violated now. The question is whether we shall present the same unanimity in resistance that we do in denying the right to commit the outrage. Unanimity on our part, unanimity in our councils, firm resolve, but kind and respectful words will preserve peace. Sir, I desire peace. I would lament a war with England, or with any other power, as much as any other man in the Senate. Nor do I think that my constituents desire war, but I believe that the true way to prevent it, is to be prepared to resist aggression the moment it is made. What is the argument we hear used to day? The Senator from South Carolina, (Mr. HAMMOND,) who knows that I have for him the highest respect, portrays to us our weak, feeble, and defenseless condition, our thousands of miles of coast, our small navy, our limited resources, to show that we are not ready for a war now. Sir, let Great Britain believe that picture, and she will be ready now for a war with us.

Mr. HAMMOND. I did not speak about war to-day. The measure proposed by the Naval Committee was one recommended before this speck of war arose upon the horizon, and it was a necessary peace measure. Six out of the seven members of the Naval Committee thought that, as a peace measure, we should construct double the amount of vessels that it is proposed to build; but I studiously avoided bringing in this question of war in portraying our resources to-day. I stated distinctly, that if I was advocating this measure as a war measure, I should think it a very meagre one; and I regret that this debate, which is on a necessary peace measure, has extended into the question of war which would be much more appropriate on two or three measures that are to come up. I would be glad if Senators would avoid the question of war with England, and let us take a vote upon this measure which, whether we have war or peace, in my opinion, should pass.



Mr. DOUGLAS. I am very grateful to the Senator from South Carolina, for the correction that he has made. I would not misrepresent him, and I am sorry to have misapprehended him. I only say that I concur fully with him, that the measure which he advocated is a wise and judicious one, as a peace measure, but I think the necessity for it is more imperative in consequence of the little specks of war that we see upon the horizon. I have reason to suppose so, from the fact that no Senator can rise to discuss it without referring to the possibility or probability of war with England. But, sir, I cannot join with him in the expression of surprise or regret, that the discussion of the possibilities of war or of collision with England, should have grown up upon the discussion of the measure. He says it will all be repeated again. Very true; but if the Senators who have alluded to the English question had let it come up first, as the Senator from Virginia himself knows I desired to have it, and had let it be decided, then when the navy bill came up we should know whether it was necessary to make provision in the navy bill for the contingencies that might be presented by this English difficulty. If we could have been allowed to have taken up that question, and discussed the bill reported by the Committee on Foreign Relations, and the bill that I introduced, for which the Committee reported theirs as a substitute, and the subsequent bill that I introduced or agreed upon any measure to authorize the President to resist the British pretension of a right of search and visitation, then the Senate with entire unanimity would have joined in the support of whatever was necessary to carry it out; then the recommendation of the Committee on Naval Affairs would have met with no opposition; Senators who oppose it now, would have supported it then. I desired that question to come up first. I think we ought to lay aside the navy bill now; we ought to refuse to take up the army bill until we decide whether or not we are going to sustain the President in resisting the practice of the right of search. If we are going to sustain him on that point, we must give him the means, trust him, rally around him, strengthen his hands, support him in protecting our flag, and maintaining the honor of the country. If, on the contrary, we are not to do that, let us say no more about British aggressions, no more about the right of search, no more in regard to her shooting across the bows of our vessels. Let us be silent on all these points, and recognize them as right, unless we are going to resist them; and if we are to resist them, now is the time. Present unanimity now, a unanimous vote, as you did in 1839; give the means to the President, and you will have no more war, and no repetition of the right of search. Our divisions are the only encouragement that Great Britain has. Our vacillation, our hesitation, our nervousness about the defenseless condition of our coasts and of our cities are the sources of encouragement to England.

Sir, I repel the idea that the American coast is so defenseless as represented. I have passed round a great portion of the British coast, and I undertake to assert that the American coast is in a better condition of defense than that of Great Britain. New York is better defended than Liverpool or London to-day. It is easier for a fleet to



enter the harbor of Liverpool or London than New York. There are not as many obstacles in the way in the British cities as in the American. It is possible that a steam fleet might run by the fortifications into either. It is not probable that it would ever escape from there if it did: but it is possible that it might effect its escape. But, sir, I do not believe that our coast is more exposed than hers, and I do not believe our commerce is more exposed than hers. I do not believe England is any better prepared for war with us than we are with her. If she has a larger navy, she has a more exposed interest to protect by that navy. She has her troubles in India; she has them at the Cape; she has them all over the world; and her navy is divided, and her army divided to protect them in those detached places, on every continent and every island of the globe. Sir, the extent of her power, spreading all around the globe, is one of the greatest sources of her weakness; and the other fact that she is a commercial nation, and we are an agricultural people, shows that she may be ruined, and her citizens starved, while we, although at war abroad, are happy and prosperous at home.

Besides, sir, as has been intimated by the Senator from Massachusetts, England has given pledges for her good behavior on this continent. She is bound over to keep the peace. She has large possessions upon this continent, of which she could be deprived in ninety days after war existed; and she knows that the moment she engages in war with us that moment her power upon the American continent and upon the adjacent islands ceases to exist. While I am opposed to war—while I have no idea of any breach of the peace with England, yet I confess to you, sir, if war should come by her act and not ours—by her invasion of our right and our vindication of the same, I would administer to every citizen and every child Hannibal's oath of eternal hostility, as long as the English flag waved, or their government claimed a foot of land upon the American continent or the adjacent islands. Sir, I would make it a war that would settle our disputes forever, not only of the right of search upon the seas, but the right to tread with a hostile foot upon the soil of the American continent or its appendages. England sees that these consequences would result. Her statesmen understand these results as well we, and much better. Her statesmen have more respect for us in this particular than we have for ourselves. They will never push this question to the point of war. They will look you in the eye, march to you steadily, as long as they find it is prudent. If you cast the eye down she will rush upon you. If you look her in the eye steadily, she will shake hands with you as friends, and have respect for you.

Mr. HAMMOND. Suppose she does not?

Mr. DOUGLAS. Suppose she does not, my friend from South Carolina asks me. If she does not, then we will appeal to the God of battles—we will arouse the patriotism of the American nation—we will blot out all distinctions of party, the voice of faction will be hushed, the American people will be a unit, none but the voice of patriotism



will be heard, and from the North and the South, from the East and the West, we will come up as a band of brothers, animated by a common spirit and a common patriotism, as were our fathers of the Revolution, to repel the foreign enemy, and afterwards differ as we please, and discuss at our leisure matters of domestic dispute. Sir, I am willing to suppose the case which is suggested by the Senator from South Carolina: Suppose England does not respect our rights? To fight her now——

Mr. HAMMOND. I said, suppose England would not submit to be bullied.

Mr. DOUGLAS. Who proposes to bully England?

Mr. HAMMOND. I understood the Senator to say, that if we looked down, she would rush on us; but if we looked up, she would give way. I consider that bullying.

Mr. DOUGLAS. Precisely; that is the case of a bully always. He will fix his eye on his antagonist and see if it is steady. If it is not, he will approach a little nearer. If it is, he stops; but, if his eye sinks, he rushes on him—and that is the parallel in which I put England, playing the bully with us. The question is, whether we will look her steadily in the eye, and maintain our rights against her aggressions. We do not wish to bully England. She is resisting no claim of ours, She sets up the claim to search our vessels, stop them on the high seas, invade our rights, and we say to her that we will not submit to that aggression. I would ask to have the United States act upon the defensive in all things—make no threat, indulge in no bullying, but simply assert our right, then maintain the assertion with whatever power may be necessary, and the God of our fathers may have imparted to us for maintaining it—that is all. I believe that is the true course to peace. I repeat that, if war with England comes, it will result from our vacillation, our division, our hesitation, our apprehensions lest we might be whipped in the fight. Perhaps we might. I do not believe it. I believe the moment England declares war against the United States, the prestige of her power is gone. It will unite our own people; it will give us the sympathy of the world; it will destroy her commerce and her manufactures, while it will extend our own. It will sink her to a second rate power upon the face of the globe, and leave us without a rival who can dispute our supremacy. We shall, however, come to that point early through the paths of peace. Such is the tendency of things now. I would rather approach it by peaceable, quiet means, by the arts and sciences, by agriculture, by commerce, by immigration, by natural growth and expansion, than by warfare. But if England is impatient of our rising power, if she desires to hasten it, and should force war upon us, she will seal her doom now; whereas, Providence might extend to her, if not a pardon, at least a reprieve, for a few short years to come.

I repeat, again, that I am for peace and not for war. I have proposed no proposition except with a view to peace. I believe that the power



I desire to entrust in the hands of the President is advisable and necessary for peace, and the friends of peace should rally as a unit and give him that power. I am willing to trust him with the very power, in the precise terms, and for the same object, for which he and his compatriots in 1839 entrusted with President Van Buren.







